

*Common with
Norwich, Colchester & Oxford* *Five Year Plan*

The Cambridge Regional Heritage Strategy

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Historical resources are easily lost through social and economic development. Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council have long helped to preserve aspects of our heritage; but provision for things other than buildings and landscape is not secure enough. So the Councils now want to improve care in Cambridge and the surrounding district. Will you let them know your views?

BACKGROUND

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After years of growing concern, a meeting of Councillors, representatives of local societies, and experts was held in Cambridge, in December 1996. They decided that, if the three local Councils act together, they could encourage more effective provision. The South Eastern Museums Service offered help for studying the options, and a Steering Group was formed for the purpose (see back page).

The following year, the Group organised a survey of museums, archives, libraries and other providers for local history; and they looked into how the same things work in and around Colchester, Norwich and Oxford – selected for their similarities to Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The comparison showed that Local Authority support in our area is very modest; but the local survey revealed many opportunities for improvement by

cooperation not only between the Councils but also among the museums, archives and other organisations.

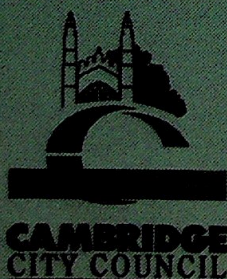
PRINCIPLES

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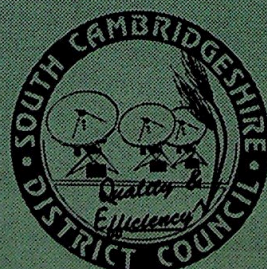
Considering both the comparative lack of public provision here and the pace of local change, the Steering Group recommended the Councils to work with five principles. In order of priority – the most important first – they are:

- 1 to encourage collection, preservation and conservation of historic resources;
- 2 to understand who uses those resources, and how they value and treat them;
- 3 to help to provide facilities for using the collections – museums, archives etc.;
- 4 to help to ensure availability of expert skills and assistance at the museums etc.;
- 5 to promote preservation and the collections, and to encourage liaison among users and providers.

Supporting these principles, urged the Group, is the process of life-long learning. Together, the five principles and education form a cycle of activity which sustains the heritage.



Cambridgeshire
County Council



LOCAL STUDIES

For many of us, a general local studies collection is the first point of enquiry in local history. The most important for our area is the Cambridgeshire Collection in Cambridge Central Library. Improved provision is now in hand for branch libraries as well.

MUSEUMS

The Folk Museum, in Cambridge, is housed in a 16th and 17th Century inn. Ironically, this wonderful building is impossible to adapt for either new forms of display or additions to the collection. The collection is the most comprehensive among the museums.

The Cambridge Museum of Technology occupies the old pumping station, its chimney one of the town's landmarks. The building is far from ideal for preserving the collection, however; and here too much more storage space is needed.

The Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology has the best display of local archaeology; and important material is held in store too. Although primarily an academic collection, it is open to the public.

The Farmland Museum was reopened at Denny Abbey in 1997. Its first year here was a resounding success with visitors. New too is the St Neots Museum.

Also including collections from near Cambridge are the Royston & District Museum and the Saffron Walden Museum. Royston Museum has a growing collection of archives and documents on local history too.

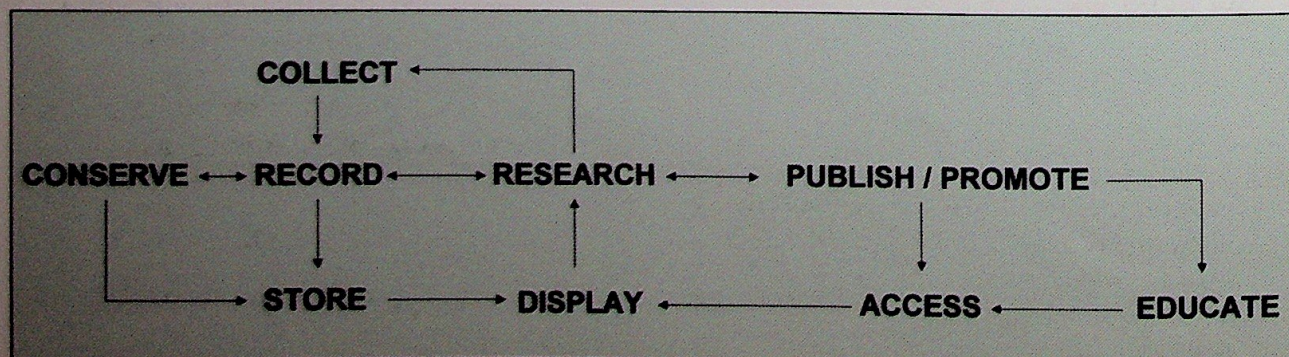
ARCHIVES

The principal local archive is the County Record Office, in Cambridge. The collection is outgrowing its accommodation; and the boom in family and local history research has stretched the facilities for users beyond capacity.

For several purposes, the Cambridge University Archive is a major resource. Also kept in the University Library are the Ely Diocesan Records. Several of the Cambridge Colleges too have archives important for local economic history. Access to these more specialised collections usually depends on written application.

DATA BASES

The County Council has a Sites & Monuments Record for archaeology and a record on buildings. They are trying to make these data bases more accessible. The City Council is developing a single data base for both fields.



The cycle of activity which sustains the heritage.

OBJECTIVES

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The Steering Group has recommended 21 Objectives. Copies of their report can be consulted at public libraries. The three Councils have accepted the Strategy in principle; but they have yet to agree on particular commitments. Which of the following Objectives, do you think, are the priorities?

MUSEUMS

- Encourage the museums to coordinate their collecting policies with each other.
- Work out an agenda for research.
- Find more storage space for the Folk Museum.
- Find more storage space and ways to reduce damp at the Technology Museum.
- Work out a scheme for museums to cooperate in display and exhibition.
- Look into whether the area needs a new archaeology gallery.
- Assess public provision for keeping up with the results of amateur collecting.
- Improve promotion of collections and museums.
- The County Council runs a store that backs the museums up: assess options for improving it.

archives

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- Support current attempts to alleviate the problems of the County Record Office.

- Assess the new options for (a) reproduction and exchange of data from archives and (b) exchanging data between archives and other sources of information.
- Encourage a forum of archivists.
- Help the County Record Office to work out an active collecting policy.
- Assess the feasibility of coordinating the archives of the three Local Authorities.

local studies

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- Support the Cambridgeshire Collection as the main public local studies collection.
 - Look into options for integrating different sources and data bases for local studies.
 - Improve links between the local studies collections and (a) other heritage providers and (b) people using the collections.
 - Assess requirements for secondary local studies collections.

data bases

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- Develop and integrate the Sites & Monuments Record and the Historic & Listed Buildings Data Base.
 - Look into setting up data bases for other aspects of the human heritage.
 - Encourage provision for wider public access to the information systems.

*English Heritage
funded support for part of 1700*

*Nick Jones advocates more of a
joint strategy with building & landscape
as distinct from its part of the heritage
backed up by conservation officer for City Council*

ACTION

With such a comprehensive plan over all, the quality of proposals for particular schemes of development would be enhanced. Funders and sponsors will recognise this.

The Steering Group has out-lined a plan for developing the Strategy over five years. It has also drawn up a pilot scheme for testing six of the Objectives during one year.

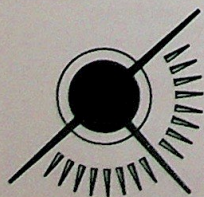
The Group recommends too that the Heritage Strategy should eventually be broadened to cover buildings and cultural landscapes as well as the 'portable heritage'. The latter cannot be fully understood without its setting in towns, villages and the countryside.

If you have any comments on the Cambridge Regional Heritage Strategy, please

- let any member of the Steering Group know, or
- leave a note for 'J Goldsmith, Museums Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council, Shire Hall' at any public library, or
- tell John Goldsmith directly
(tel.: (01223)718136; fax: (01223)362425;
e.mail:
John.Goldsmith@libraries.camcnty.gov.uk)

and come to the meeting about the Strategy at 6.30 on 28 September at the Cambridge Guildhall.

The Cambridge Regional Heritage Strategy is a joint initiative by Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council supported by the South Eastern Museums Service.



**south eastern
museums service**

the Steering Group

Cllr John Durrant (Cambridge City Council, Chairman), Mr Ken Batcheler (Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils), Dr Christopher Chippindale (Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology), Mrs Kate Brown (Farmland Museum), Cllr Nigel Cathcart (South Cambridgeshire District Council), Mrs Pam Fitzgibbon-Halls (Folk Museum), Mr Tim Heathcote (South Eastern Museums Service), Prof. Mary Hesse and Mrs Susan Oosthuizen (Cambridge Antiquarian Society), Dr Adam Upjohn (Cambridge Museum of Technology), Cllr Angela White (Cambridgeshire County Council)

opening hours (to October)

Cambridgeshire Collection: Mon and Th 9.30-7, Tu, Fri, Sat 9.30-5, Wed 12-7
(tel. 01223-712008)

Folk Museum: Mon-Sat 10.30-5, Sun 2-5
(tel. 01223-355159)

Cambridge Museum of Technology:
summer Sun's, BHol's (tel. 01223-368650)

University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology: Tu-Sat 2-4.30 and 16 June-11 September 10.30-4.30 (tel. 01223-333516)

Farmland Museum: daily 12-5
(tel. 01223-860988)

St Neots Museum: Wed-Sat 10.30-4.30
(tel. 01480-388921)

Royston & District Museum: Wed, Th, Sat 10-5, summer Sun's, BHol's 2-5
(tel. 01763-242587)

Saffron Walden Museum: Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 2.30-5 (tel. 01799-510333)

County Record Office: Tu-Th 9-5.15 (and Tu evening), Fri 9-4.15 (lunches shut)
(tel. 01223-717281)

Sites & Monuments Record: by appointment (tel. 01223-717312)

Historic & Listed Buildings Data Base: by appointment (tel. 01223-717605)